

'71 KOREA EVIDENCE FAILED TO REACH PROBERS

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The government had evidence as early as 1971 that probably could have thwarted improper South Korean lobbying efforts, but little of the information reached the proper investigative authorities, new congressional testimony indicates.

Investigations involving Korean-born businessman Tongsun Park in the early 1970s by three federal agencies all failed to uncover the fact that he was linked with the Korean CIA. Yet, according to the new evidence, American intelligence agents, the director of the FBI and possibly senior officials of the Nixon administration learned at about the same time that Park and other suspected Korean operatives were engaged in an operation that allegedly included the bribing of U.S. congressmen.

This paradox was sketched in detail during a hearing yesterday by a House International Relations subcommittee that is investigating what actions, if any, federal authorities took to blunt what has become the Korean influence-buying scandal.

"THIS IS A VERY disturbing record we've developed," subcommittee Chairman Donald M. Fraser, D-Minn., said after yesterday's session. "It defies explanation."

Indeed, testimony and evidence made public at the hearing showed a perplexing pattern of bureaucratic bungling and, in some cases, clear efforts to conceal, on national security grounds, information about the activity of Korean agents.

According to summaries of newly declassified U.S. intelligence reports made public at the hearing, the late director of the FBI, J. Edgar Hoover, was advised of the South Korean activities beginning in September 1971.

Among other things, the reports to Hoover alleged that two congressional staff aides were "connected with the KCIA" at that time, that Park already had made payments to one member of Congress, that Park was "acting under KCIA direction" and that the South Korean government "was directly involved in directing the contribution of several hundred thousand dollars to the Democratic Party."

The source of the reports, a U.S. intelligence agency, was censored from the documents made public by

the subcommittee, as were the names of Americans mentioned in them. It was learned, however, that the original reports named Suzi Park Thomson, an aide to former House Speaker Carl Albert, as one of the congressional employees said to have had KCIA connections.

THE CONGRESSMAN reported to have received payments from Park was identified by subcommittee sources as former Rep. Richard Hanna, D-Calif., who pleaded guilty last week to conspiring in the South Korean scheme.

The material made public by the subcommittee reveals that Hoover prepared top secret, "eyes only" memoranda on the intelligence reports for then-Attorney General John N. Mitchell and Henry Kissinger, President Nixon's chief foreign policy adviser at that time.

At the same time, however, he warned the two Nixon administration officials that the source of the information "is extremely sensitive and such as to preclude any investigation whatsoever" or any dissemination of the intelligence material.

In the most bizarre turn of events yesterday, Mitchell, on medical furlough from an Alabama prison where he is serving a one-to-four-year sentence in the Watergate cover-up case, testified that he never saw most of the memoranda prepared for his and Kissinger's eyes only.

He acknowledged receiving one document from Hoover concerning the Korean matter, a Sept. 30, 1971, letter citing the alleged connection between the KCIA and Thomson, the Albert aide.

Mitchell testified that he was so surprised and concerned about the allegation that he personally visited Albert in the speaker's office to discuss the report.

Albert, he reported, had been "rather passive" on hearing the allegation and had defended Thomson as a "nice young lady who had an American education." He said Albert had added that Thomson was working in a "non-sensitive" job in his office and that he saw no reason for any action against her on the basis of the intelligence report.

Thomson, in fact, remained on Albert staff until he retired from the House at the end of 1976.

Mitchell told the subcommittee he never saw other memos that supposedly were prepared for him, including a Nov. 24, 1971 document that alleged that the Blue House, South Korea's presidential palace, was involved in a six-figure contribution to the Democratic Party.

"I'M SURE I would remember," Mitchell said. "There is a reference in the memorandum to hundreds of thousands of dollars being transferred by the Koreans to the Democratic Party in connection with an election I had just been through managing on the Republican side."

"There is a reference to a president (South Korean President Park Chung Hee) in here and also a reference that a congressman had been bought off. I'm sure I would recognize it and remember it."

One of the documents Mitchell said he had not previously seen bore his initials, normally an indication that he had received the material. But the former attorney general said he had not placed the markings on the document.

Under generally friendly questioning by Fraser, Mitchell said he could provide no explanation for